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New York

President:	Mr. Rugunda	(Uganda)
Members:	Austria	Mr. Mayr-Harting
	Burkina Faso	Mr. Koudougou
	China	Mr. Liu Zhenmin
	Costa Rica	Mr. Urbina
	Croatia	Mr. Vilović
	France	Mr. Ripert
	Japan	Mr. Takasu
	Libyan Arab Jamahiriya	Mr. Dabbashi
	Mexico	Mr. Heller
	Russian Federation	Mr. Churkin
	Turkey	Mr. Çorman
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Parham
	United States of America	Ms. DiCarlo
	Viet Nam	Mr. Bui The Giang

Agenda

The situation in Myanmar

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The meeting was called to order at 11.40 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in Myanmar

The President: I should like to inform the Council that I have received a letter from the representative of Myanmar in which he requests to be invited to participate in the consideration of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite that representative to participate in the consideration of the item, without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Swe (Myanmar) took a seat at the Council table.

The President: The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Security Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

I welcome the Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. Ban Ki-moon, and invite him to take the floor.

The Secretary-General: I thank the Security Council for this opportunity to brief its members at their request on my visit to Myanmar from 3 to 4 July 2009 at the invitation of the Government of Myanmar. I wish to thank all interested States members of this Council and in the Group of Friends of the Secretary-General on Myanmar for supporting my decision to visit Myanmar at this time, and also for supporting my efforts in the context of my good offices.

Whereas the objective of my first visit, last year, was to unblock the humanitarian situation caused by Cyclone Nargis, my objective this time was to engage Myanmar's senior leadership directly on a number of serious and long-standing concerns that I believe cannot be left unaddressed at this critical stage of Myanmar's transition. At a time when there is much attention to the ongoing trial of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, and on the eve of Myanmar's first elections in 20 years, it was necessary for me to raise those concerns and offer the help of the United Nations in advancing national reconciliation, democracy, respect for human rights and sustainable development.

At the outset, let me say that the refusal of the senior leadership to allow me to meet with Daw Aung San Suu Kyi was not only a deep disappointment but also a major lost opportunity for Myanmar. While this should not define our efforts, allowing such a meeting would have sent a constructive and conciliatory signal both inside and outside Myanmar. However, the United Nations engagement with Myanmar is broad and complex, encompassing as it does a range of fundamental issues of concern for the future of the country, which I was able to address during this visit.

In my two meetings with Senior General Than Shwe and an additional meeting with the Prime Minister, General Thein Sein, I discussed extensively the need for Myanmar to take meaningful steps on the five-point agenda developed in the context of my good offices, as well as in humanitarian areas. I made specific proposals, with a particular focus on three outstanding concerns that, if left unaddressed, could undermine any confidence in Myanmar's political process: first, the release of all political prisoners, including Daw Aung San Suu Kyi; secondly, the resumption of a substantive dialogue between the Government and the opposition; and thirdly, the creation of conditions conducive to credible and legitimate elections.

From experience, the United Nations has learned that elections can be unifying or divisive, depending on the level of buy-in and the quality of the process. Addressing these three concerns, including with the support of the United Nations, is therefore essential to ensuring that the political process is inclusive and serves the interests of all the people of Myanmar in a way that can be broadly accepted by the international community.

Meeting with Myanmar's registered political parties and ethnic ceasefire groups allowed me to listen to their views and concerns in this regard, which I also shared with the authorities. However, I also encouraged the two groups to remain constructive in the political process. Any successful transition will require overcoming the country's twin legacies of political deadlock and civil conflict. It is in the interests of all to ensure that any gains made so far become irreversible. While the Government has a primary obligation to address the concerns of all stakeholders, every

stakeholder has a role to play and a responsibility to assume in the interests of the nation.

On the humanitarian front, I saw for myself the progress made in one year in the recovery and reconstruction of the cyclone-affected region, thanks to unprecedented cooperation between Myanmar, the United Nations and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). In all my meetings, I stressed the need to consolidate and build on such efforts to ensure that assistance in the Ayeyarwaddy Delta is expedited and that humanitarian access is expanded to reach all vulnerable groups across the country. Just as the international community cannot hold humanitarian assistance hostage to political considerations, there is no justification for the Government's allowing humanitarian access to some of its people but not to others.

Furthermore, my visit also presented an occasion to address Myanmar's development challenge. Here, too, we know from experience that peace and security can be affected by underlying socio-economic conditions. Accordingly, I proposed to the senior leadership that it enhance cooperation with the United Nations in order to address, through a broad-based process involving all sectors of society, the pressing development needs facing the country. Empowering the people to participate in their country's development is equally important for stability, democracy and prosperity, and for ensuring that Myanmar fully benefits from and contributes to the regional and global economy.

My visit offered the clearest signal of the United Nations commitment to working with the Government and people of Myanmar to address issues of fundamental importance for the prospects of durable peace, democracy and development. While I stand ready to work to that end with all concerned, Myanmar stands to gain much from engaging meaningfully with the United Nations. To be able to convey this message clearly and directly to the highest level of Myanmar's leadership is a rare chance for the international community to be heard.

Here, as has been observed, what is more important is not so much what I came back with but what I left behind with the authorities. I have made clear my expectation and that of the international community that the Government needs to deliver on the promise to make the 2010 elections inclusive, free and fair and to take necessary steps on my specific proposals in the very near future. In this connection, Senior General Than Shwe has pledged to make the elections free and fair. But I said then and reiterate today that it is up to the Myanmar authorities to translate this into concrete action, to ensure the inclusiveness and credibility of the process and to demonstrate Myanmar's commitment to cooperation with the international community. Like all other Member States, the more Myanmar works in partnership with the United Nations, the more it affirms its sovereignty.

Before leaving Myanmar, I had the chance to publicly reiterate all my messages in a keynote speech to a large and diverse audience in Yangon. This was an unprecedented opportunity to ask openly the question that is before Myanmar's stakeholders today: How much longer can Myanmar afford to wait — and at what cost — for national reconciliation, democratic transition and full respect for human rights? My message, addressed to the international community as much as to the Government and people of Myanmar, was twofold. First, while Myanmar has a unique and complex history, the challenges it faces as a country in transition are neither exceptional nor insurmountable. Secondly, none of the challenges facing Myanmar today — political, humanitarian or development — can be addressed on their own, and failure to address them with equal attention could undermine the prospects for durable peace, democracy and prosperity.

This address was also an opportunity to stress my commitment, and that of the international community as a whole, to continued engagement. I clearly stated that Myanmar was not alone. In Myanmar as elsewhere, the United Nations works for the people — their rights, their well-being and their dignity. It is not an option; it is our responsibility. We cannot give up. The continued support of United Nations Members for my good offices efforts and their engagement — particularly that of neighbouring countries and ASEAN members — with the Myanmar authorities have therefore become even more important and necessary.

I welcome the continued support given to my efforts by the leaders of the G-8 last week, and their statement that they are "prepared to respond positively to substantive political progress undertaken by Myanmar". I also welcome the reiterated strong support extended to my good offices and personal engagement by the Group of Friends on Myanmar.

Now that I have conveyed in the clearest terms what is expected of Myanmar's leaders, it is up to them to respond positively in their country's own interests. As I mentioned in my speech, ultimately it is the people of Myanmar who will bear the cost of any lack of engagement and cooperation on the part of their Government with the United Nations and the international community. That is why Myanmar's leaders have a responsibility not only to their own people, but also to the members of the international community, to respond to the proposals I made on their behalf.

The choice for Myanmar's leaders in the coming days and weeks will be between meeting that responsibility in the interests of all concerned or failing their own people and each member of the international community. The world is now watching closely whether they will choose to act in the best interests of their country or to ignore our concerns and expectations and the needs of their people.

The President: I thank the Secretary-General for his briefing.

I shall now give the floor to the representative of Myanmar.

Mr. Swe (Myanmar): I wish to thank you, Sir, for this opportunity to make a statement at this briefing. I should also like to thank the Secretary-General for his efforts to support Myanmar's democratization process and for his comprehensive briefing today. The Secretary-General's recent visit to Myanmar was his second in just over a year, and Under-Secretary-General Gambari's ninth. It is noteworthy that, during the Secretary-General's visit to Myanmar, we did our utmost to accommodate his requests, although we were unable to arrange the requested meeting Daw Aung San Suu Kyi.

It is an established protocol practice that our Head of State receives foreign dignitaries only once during their visits. However, at the request of the Secretary-General, Senior General Than Shwe received the Secretary-General twice. During their meetings, the Secretary-General expressed the views of the United Nations and the international community. Senior General Than Shwe thoroughly explained the developments in Myanmar's political process and highlighted the two most important priorities of the Government at this moment — to hand over State power to a civilian Government after the 2010 general elections and to lay a good foundation for future social and economic development. He also assured the Secretary-General that the 2010 general elections will be free, fair, credible and arranged to ensure the participation of all citizens.

With regard to the Secretary-General's request to meet with Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, although our Head of State himself was willing to arrange the meeting, we regret our inability to accommodate the request, as the Special Court has independent jurisdiction over the matter. It is the discretion and position of the Special Court not to accommodate those who could have influence over its judgments. Our inability to arrange the meeting with Daw Aung San Suu Kyi was clearly explained before and during the Secretary-General's visit.

Arrangements were made for the Secretary-General to meet with the leaders and representatives of 10 officially registered political parties, including the National League for Democracy (NLD) and former armed groups. We also even made an arrangement for the Secretary-General to meet separately with the representatives of the NLD, although such a meeting was not included in the original programme. We would like to take this opportunity to express our appreciation and thanks to the Secretary-General for encouraging the political parties and former armed groups to participate in the national reconsolidation process.

As requested by the Secretary-General, a public "Thank you event" was arranged by the Myanmar Government, although we were fully aware that such public meetings have not taken place during the Secretary-General's recent visits to certain Member countries. Moreover, we anticipated that Secretary-General might touch on areas and issues that were not on the agenda of the event. However, with the aim of demonstrating our cooperation with the United Nations and of respecting the wishes of the Secretary-General, we arranged that unprecedented public meeting. We invited those whom the Secretary-General wished to invite, and cabinet ministers, deputy ministers and senior officials of the Government also attended that event to honour the Secretary-General.

During his visit, the Secretary-General discussed at length with the Prime Minster the social and economic development of Myanmar. As a developing country, Myanmar has been making untiring efforts for its economic and social development. However, some

countries have imposed economic sanctions instead of providing assistance and cooperation. Regrettably, official development assistance for Myanmar is less than $3 per capita, which is minimal compared to that received by similar countries. During the meeting, the Prime Minister highlighted the fact that such policies towards Myanmar hinder the social and economic development of the country and have mainly impacted people at the grassroots level. It would be more constructive and conducive to our democratization and development efforts if the international community were to view the situation of Myanmar in a wider perspective.

Despite these obstacles, the Myanmar Government has been striving to stabilize the situation in the political, social and economic fields with our own resources. We appreciate the Secretary-General's remark on Myanmar Government's endeavours to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, control HIV/AIDS, combat human trafficking and eradicate opium poppy cultivation.

During his visit, the Secretary-General also visited the Ayeyarwaddy Delta region, which was struck by Cyclone Nargis a year ago, to observe the construction of cyclone shelters and other reconstruction works carried out jointly by the Myanmar Government, United Nations agencies and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). The Secretary-General has rightly pointed out that the response to Cyclone Nargis proved the value of engagement and the unprecedented cooperation between Myanmar, the United Nations and ASEAN through the Tripartite Core Group, with the support of the international community.

With regard to the success of the visit, the Myanmar Government intends to implement all appropriate recommendations that the Secretary-General proposed. At the request of the Secretary-General, the Myanmar Government is proceeding to grant amnesty to prisoners on humanitarian grounds and with a view to enabling them to participate in the 2010 general elections. Moreover, with regard to the National Economic Forum, the Government will cooperate with the United Nations in the agricultural, livestock and fishery sectors for the betterment of people at the grass-roots level.

With regard to the offer of technical assistance in elections, Myanmar will cooperate with the United Nations if technical assistance is necessary for the 2010 general elections. The State will enact a political party registration law and election law in due time. Myanmar is resolved to implement everything it possibly can with a view to facilitating the smooth attainment of the democratic goals it has set for the nation and its people.

Myanmar's acceptance of the good offices role of the Secretary-General and its active cooperation in the process, as well as the Secretary-General's second visit to Myanmar in just over a year, are important milestones of cooperation between Myanmar and the United Nations. We are of the view that the Secretary-General's visit to Myanmar was successful. We fully agree with the Secretary-General's remark that his inability to meet with Daw Aung San Suu Kyi should not be seen as the only benchmark for the success or failure of his visit.

Myanmar today is steadfastly proceeding on its chosen path to democracy. The challenges faced by Myanmar are complex and multifaceted. When one considers Myanmar's geopolitical location, one sees that it is surrounded by countries with different political systems, cultures and religions and that over 40 per cent of the world's population resides in our five neighbours. Myanmar itself is a multi-ethnic and multireligious country. Therefore, we must be neutral and harmonize with all our neighbours for the stability of the region. We have to consider, inter alia, the various historical, geopolitical and multi-ethnic backgrounds. Exerting undue pressure from the outside without fully comprehending the challenges faced by Myanmar will not be conducive to the country's home-grown political process.

It cannot be stressed enough that no one can address the complex challenges that Myanmar is currently facing better than the Government and the peoples of Myanmar. We are making significant strides in the national reconsolidation and democratization process. Thus, Myanmar is nearly in the final stage of achieving our ultimate goal. Myanmar is not a threat to international peace and security, so no Security Council action is warranted.

I should like to close by reaffirming our commitment to continuing our cooperation with the United Nations and with the good offices role of the Secretary-General. The continued support, understanding and cooperation of the United Nations and the

international community will best assist our endeavour to establish a democratic nation.

The President: I shall now give the floor to those Council members who wish to make statements.

Mr. Parham (United Kingdom): I should like to begin by thanking the Secretary-General for his briefing on his visit to Burma. It required courage and determination on his part to proceed with the visit. His decision had our full support; the wider international community supported it too. That support has been reflected in many recent statements, most notably the communiqué on Burma issued at the Group of Eight summit on 9 July, which the Secretary-General mentioned.

We believe that, by going to Burma, the Secretary-General demonstrated in the clearest possible way the commitment of the United Nations to the progress of democracy, human rights and economic development in that country. The people of Burma will certainly have taken heart from the strong leadership that the Secretary-General has shown.

We also welcome the unambiguous messages on the need for political reform that the Secretary-General delivered directly to Senior General Than Shwe and the leadership of the State Peace and Development Council — messages which set out the international community's concerns and which the Council has expressed through its presidential statements. Those statements have made clear what needs to happen, including the release of all political prisoners, including Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, and the resumption of an enhanced, time-bound dialogue among the Government, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and all political parties and ethnic groups, facilitated by the United Nations.

We welcome the fact that the Secretary-General was able to meet with ceasefire groups and all 10 of the registered political parties, including the National League for Democracy, but we echo the Secretary-General's disappointment at the Government's decision not to allow him to meet Daw Aung San Suu Kyi herself. It is a measure of their obstinacy and of their lack of commitment to genuine progress that they failed to grant that request, particularly at a time when Daw Aung San Suu Kyi is subject to a trial widely acknowledged to be a travesty of justice. As the only political figure in the country to have received a popular democratic mandate, she has a central role to play in the future of a democratic Burma. Her treatment by the regime is not the only criterion by which the regime should be judged, but it demonstrates the regime's fear of a free and fair political process and its unwillingness to engage with international opinion.

The Secretary-General's visit was an opportunity for the Government of Burma to transform its relationship with the international community, which stands ready to respond positively to real progress. The regime's failure to take that opportunity has only served to isolate it further. We can only hope that we may yet see progress in the coming days; it is not too late. But if it does not come, and if we see an unjust outcome in Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's trial, the international community will need to follow the Secretary-General's lead and respond robustly. The onus is on the Government to act.

As the Secretary-General has just said, the world is watching. The generals cannot have failed to hear loud and clear the strong messages that the Secretary-General delivered in Rangoon when he addressed ministers and the diplomatic and non-governmental organization community. They can be in no doubt about his disappointment and the disappointment of the international community as a whole.

We urge the regime to engage constructively with the international community to meet our concerns. My Government has stated on many occasions that it remains ready to respond positively to real progress. It is deeply regrettable, therefore, that the regime has yet to take the steps that will allow us to do so.

We remain committed to working with partners in a concerted effort to start a reconciliation process in Burma. For our part, we will continue to support the efforts of the Secretary-General and his good offices mission, and we welcome his ongoing personal efforts to start a reconciliation process in Burma. He remains the international community's best hope of breaking the deadlock.

Each one of us must use whatever influence we have to encourage the regime to engage constructively and to convince them that the objectives that they say they seek — national unity, stability and economic development — are being inhibited by their actions. They must understand that their road map and the elections that they planned will have no credibility if political prisoners, including Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, are prevented from playing their full part in the

political process. They must respond positively to the Secretary-General and to the international community, which he represents.

Mr. Heller (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): I should like to begin this statement by thanking the Secretary-General for his presence today and for the briefing that he gave us on his recent visit to Myanmar. My delegation is particularly grateful for the good offices efforts that the Secretary-General has been making in Myanmar, which proceed from his personal concern to help improve the political, economic and social situation in that country — a concern that is shared by a good part of the international community. I also thank the Permanent Representative of Myanmar for his statement to the Council today. We appreciated its forward-looking content — at least, that is our hope.

The Secretary-General's recent visit to Myanmar, which was his second in a little more than a year, occurred at an opportune time. Indeed, the trip not only enabled the Secretary-General to assess the state of rebuilding following Cyclone Nargis, but also took place in the context of the preparations for the general elections to be held in 2010.

With regard to reconstruction efforts and humanitarian assistance, we welcome the fact that progress has been made, in particular as a result of the cooperation among the Government of Myanmar, the United Nations and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations through the Tripartite Core Group and the support of donors in the international community. The work of reconstruction has not yet concluded, and efforts to that end must continue.

In the political context, the scene is different and much more complex, and there are many challenges. Myanmar is preparing for its first elections in 20 years, and my delegation believes that many issues must still be resolved if they are to be transparent and fully inclusive of those of all political persuasions in Myanmar.

The forthcoming elections must be aimed at facilitating Myanmar's peaceful transition towards democracy and national reconciliation, placing priority on strengthening the rule of law and protecting human rights. In that connection, the elections must have the support not only of the Government, which bears primary responsibility for organizing them, but also of all registered political parties and of those rebel groups that have demonstrated a readiness to lay down their weapons. We hope that the Government will create the conditions necessary to engage in a genuine dialogue with all ethnic groups and minorities in order to achieve full national reconciliation. This means that all political prisoners, including Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, must be released as soon as possible. Their participation in the elections will guarantee the credibility of the process and thus its legitimacy. It would therefore have been preferable for Senior General Than Shwe to have allowed the Secretary-General to visit the emblematic Ms. Suu Kyi, who has once again been arrested under conditions which have not yet been fully clarified and is now subject to a new trial.

The Government of Myanmar now has an opportunity to strengthen the process of national reconciliation — thus making it possible for the population to enjoy their civil and political rights, building peace and laying the basis for the country's future economic development. That objective should be pursued with the support of the United Nations through the good offices of the Secretary-General, but also with the support of States in the region, in particular States members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, who play a particularly relevant role given their close relations with the Government of Myanmar.

The constant flow of refugees from Myanmar to Thailand reflects the lack of guaranteed protection for the civilian population, as well as the repeated violations of human rights in Myanmar. We therefore urge all regional actors to take necessary measures to ensure that the more than 100,000 refugees have adequate protection and shelter.

We are also concerned with the situation of child soldiers. While we recognize the efforts of the Government in Myanmar in that regard, we feel that they have been insufficient. We urge the Government to ensure the rights of those minors and to cooperate with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict on measures to demobilize all child solders and reintegrate them into civilian life with their families.

The message sent by the Secretary-General to the people and the Government of Myanmar during his visit was clear. The United Nations and the international community are looking to the present and the future of an independent and sovereign Myanmar and will spare no necessary effort towards dialogue and

cooperation, in order to guarantee the country's political, economic and social development on the path to peace.

Mr. Ripert (France) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, I would like to thank the Secretary-General for his briefing and the Permanent Representative of Burma for his statement, to which I listened with great attention. It was essential for the Council to be informed without delay of the results of the mission of the Secretary-General at time when the development of the situation in Burma continues to be a matter of major concern for the international community.

I also wish to congratulate the Secretary-General on his courageous, determined and tenacious commitment on this issue. He went to Burma with our support and clearly aware of the difficulties of his mission, in order to convey the expectations of the international community to the Burmese authorities. Unfortunately, as he recalled, they refused to cooperate. Among other things, they did not allow him to meet with Aung San Suu Kyi and refused any substantive dialogue. The authorities thus lost an opportunity to show their desire to undertake genuine national reconciliation and a process of democratization. It is not after the visit of the Secretary-General that one should come before the Council to state that one is ready for dialogue and reconciliation; it was before and during the Secretary-General's visit that that should have been done.

The international community has shown its readiness to work in a constructive manner with Burma in supporting the political process, but also to support the economic and social development of the country with strict respect for its sovereignty and its territorial integrity. That is the message of goodwill that the Secretary-General carried. The hand he held out was ignored.

The authorities' unwillingness to consider the Secretary-General's proposals continues to raise questions about the attitude of the Burmese authorities in general, since the repression of the democratic movement in autumn 2007. In its presidential statement of 11 October 2007 (S/PRST/2007/37), the Council set forth clear and precise expectations unanimously. Those demands were reaffirmed in May 2008 and May 2009.

Almost two years after they were first expressed, where do we stand in terms of their achievement? The first expectation was the timely release of all political prisoners. What have we seen? First, the number of those prisoners has continued to increase, in spite of a handful of releases. New promises have been made, including today, with respect to the release of some, but not all prisoners. Here we recall that the demands of the Council were for the release of all political prisoners.

Next, although the appeal for the release of political prisoners concerned, of course, Ms. Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, who continues to be detained since 2003, instead of freeing her the authorities arrested her in May and launched a political trial against her without any justification, to the consternation of the rest of the world, including the friends of Burma. The fact that the announcement of the verdict is continually being delayed clearly demonstrates the embarrassment of a regime at the weakness of the so-called charges against the head of the opposition and — as my colleague from Great Britain recalled — the only political leader in Burma to have won an election democratically.

The second demand of the Council was for the launch of a genuine dialogue among the Government, Ms. Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and the other concerned parties and ethnic groups, with a view to inclusive national reconciliation. Instead of initiating that dialogue, the authorities chose a policy of fait accompli, by unilaterally implementing a so-called road map. That strategy led to increased polarization within the country.

The third demand of the Security Council bore on cooperation with the United Nations. After several visits by the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General, Mr. Ibrahim Gambari — whose efforts and tenacity I commend — the Secretary-General went to Burma to offer assistance in the political, economic and humanitarian areas. No response was given to his suggestions, which were made in a constructive spirit.

The Security Council has shown great patience with respect to those various demands. We are ready to actively support change, howsoever gradual, in the right direction. It must be noted that not only have the Burmese authorities done nothing to respond to the demands of the Council, but that, over the past few months, they have taken decisions that run directly counter to those demands.

We all know that the Burmese crisis goes beyond the political dimension. The country is facing enormous economic, social and governance challenges. A response to the needs of the population in all of those areas is urgently needed.

The European Union is a major actor in humanitarian and development assistance. It has continually shown its readiness to revise its common position as the situation evolves. The onset of a genuine political process leading to national reconciliation continues, however, to be a necessary precondition to positive momentum in all areas. Daw Aung San Suu Kyi is an essential and irreplaceable actor in that process. Her detention is intolerable, illegal and an obstacle to dialogue. Without the prior liberation of the Nobel Peace Prize laureate, any electoral process would be nothing but a parody of democracy aimed at legitimizing a fait accompli.

The current impasse is not a reason for the Council to sit back and do nothing and we agree with the Secretary-General on that point. France also encourages the Special Adviser to continue his efforts; however, those efforts can be successful only if the international community, in particular regional actors, works actively in favour of change. The Security Council must continue to follow the situation and to clearly remind the Burmese authorities of the need to implement the demands made of them. The Council must respond firmly if Daw Aung San Suu Kyi is condemned.

We are committed to unity in the Council. However, the price of unity must not be inaction. We cannot risk further deterioration of the situation, which could contribute to instability in the country and the entire region.

Mr. Takasu (Japan): I would like to express Japan's deep gratitude to the Secretary-General for his important statement to the Security Council today on his recent visit to Myanmar. We are also grateful to the Permanent Representative of Myanmar for his statement.

At the outset, I would like to stress how firmly Japan supports the good offices effort of the Secretary-General, assisted by Special Adviser Gambari. As a country of the region, Japan has followed the situation in Myanmar with great interest and concern. Based on our long-standing excellent bilateral relationship, we are maintaining a close dialogue with the Government of Myanmar to assist and support the good offices efforts of the Secretary-General and Mr. Gambari.

The Government of Myanmar has been implementing a seven-step road map for democratization. With general elections scheduled for next year, this is a crucial stage in the democratization process. The attention of the international community has recently been focused on the situation surrounding the trial of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi. It is therefore important and timely for the Secretary-General to visit Myanmar to personally convey the concerns of the international community and urge the leadership to make the democratic process open, inclusive and internationally credible.

During his visit, the Secretary-General met with Senior General Than Shwe on two occasions. He called for the early release of all political prisoners, including Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, the resumption of substantive dialogue between the Government and all political parties, the holding of inclusive, internationally credible elections in 2010, an improvement in the human rights situation, national reconciliation and the establishment of a national economic forum.

We are certainly disappointed that the Government of Myanmar did not agree to the Secretary-General's request to meet with Daw Aung San Suu Kyi. However, we recognize that the Secretary-General's visit as a whole was very useful and necessary. We approve of his decision to make the visit. The Secretary-General is one of the very few political leaders who can directly convey the concerns of the international community to the country's highest leadership. We welcome the effort of the Secretary-General to unequivocally convey to the top leaders all the points of common concern shared by all of us.

As reported in the Council today, the Secretary-General had a full, detailed and substantive exchange of views with the leadership on the concrete steps we would like it to take. He also expressed to the leaders the support of the United Nations for Myanmar's efforts. It was also significant that the Secretary-General could meet all political parties, including the National League for Democracy and ceasefire groups, and make a very candid public address in Yangon.

Although there has been no immediate response to other points addressed by the Secretary-General, we hope that the Myanmar authorities will seriously consider all the issues and concerns of the international

community and come up with a positive response in due course. We share the expectations expressed by the Secretary-General that the Myanmar Government should match deeds to its words of promise to cooperate with the United Nations. We should closely monitor how the Myanmar Government follows up the outcome of the Secretary-General's visit.

With regard to the case of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, Japan has conveyed its deep concern to Myanmar's authorities at a high level. We have appealed to them to take appropriate and lenient actions. Once there are positive moves by the Myanmar authorities, it will be important for us to respond positively with concrete steps on our part, as confirmed by G-8 leaders at the summit meeting in L'Aquila last week.

The good offices effort of the Secretary-General does not end with this one visit. Japan will continue to support further good offices efforts by the United Nations. At the same time, we appeal to the Myanmar Government to take positive steps to advance the democratic process in an all-inclusive manner.

Ms. DiCarlo (United States of America): I, too, should like to offer a particular word of thanks to the Secretary-General. The United States joins other Council members in reiterating our strong support for him and his good offices mission, as well as for his Special Adviser, Ibrahim Gambari. We appreciate the Secretary-General's briefing today. We are especially grateful that he was able to convey critical messages directly to the Burmese Government. We also appreciate the presence today of the Permanent Representative of Burma. We hope that the Burmese Government will implement all of the Secretary-General's recommendations.

We note that the Secretary-General was able to meet with Senior General Than Shwe, several members of the National League for Democracy's central executive committee and representatives of other registered political parties. But we are very disappointed that Burmese authorities refused the Secretary-General's request to meet with Daw Aung San Suu Kyi. By turning down that simple, straightforward request, the Burmese Government missed a critical opportunity, in the words of the Secretary-General, to show its commitment to a new era of political openness.

We await the regime's response to the important challenges that the Secretary-General presented to it during his visit. If the authorities fail to credibly address those challenges, they will miss yet another chance to make meaningful progress on concerns repeatedly uttered by the Council. The path the authorities are pursuing leads to neither democracy nor stability. It is the Burmese people who will suffer further if this opportunity to change course is not taken.

As 2010 approaches, the Government has repeatedly assured us that next year's elections will be free and fair. But there can be no free and fair elections while key leaders of Burma's democratic opposition, including Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and more than 2,000 other political prisoners, languish in Burma's prisons. We do not seek to dictate Burma's political future. We merely seek to ensure that the will of all the Burmese people can be heard and respected.

The authorities are clearly not respecting that popular will by putting the leader of the country's democratic opposition on trial for spurious charges of violating a house arrest that was illegitimate to begin with. We are deeply concerned about those proceedings. We call on the regime to cease its actions against Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and to free her immediately and unconditionally.

We are also troubled that the authorities continue to resist addressing the grave human rights challenges facing the country. For example, recent attacks by the Burmese army and its proxies have forced more than 3,000 ethnic Karen to flee across the border into Thailand. That violence against ethnic minorities destabilizes the area around the international border and raises a red flag about the Government's treatment of Burma's ethnic groups. National reconciliation can never be achieved so long as the army continues to attack citizens of its own country. Such problems cannot be resolved by imposing plans on the citizens of Burma that lack democratic legitimacy. A democratic transition to legitimate civilian rule can be achieved only through genuine dialogue and a vision for the future that is shared by all, including the democratic opposition and all ethnic groups.

We welcome the progress that has been made in the Ayeyarwaddy Delta after the devastation wrought by Cyclone Nargis, and we recognize the crucial contribution that the Tripartite Core Group has made to

facilitate that progress. We strongly support the Secretary-General's request to grant outstanding visas to humanitarian aid workers and to broaden humanitarian support beyond the Delta. Advancement towards democracy and stability cannot be made when citizens are struggling to survive.

The Secretary-General has called for immediate action from the Burmese Government to avoid more wasted lives, lost opportunities and prolonged isolation. We could not agree more. The Secretary-General has noted that Burma cannot face its many challenges alone. Burma's generals should understand that those of us around this table are ready to help Burma ensure its future stability and restore its past prosperity. The international community has shown that it is willing to help the people of Burma. Now it is up to the Burmese authorities to show they are ready to do the same.

The Burmese Government has called cooperation with the United Nations the cornerstone of the country's foreign policy. The Secretary-General echoed this statement in his recent speech. Now is the time for Burma to match its words with deeds. We strongly encourage the authorities to seize this opportunity to engage credibly with the international community. When Burma demonstrates its willingness to respond to the international community's demands and to commit to genuine progress towards reform, the United States stands ready to respond.

Mr. Mayr-Harting (Austria): I wish to thank the Secretary-General for joining us here today, for the briefing he gave us today and, above all, for his active engagement on Myanmar as well as for that of his Special Adviser, Mr. Ibrahim Gambari. Allow me to also acknowledge the presence of the Permanent Representative of Myanmar and let me assure him that we have listened to his statement very attentively.

It was a courageous decision, on the part of the Secretary-General, to visit Myanmar and to seek a dialogue with both the Myanmar Government and the opposition. It has my country's full support. Austria strongly welcomes his leadership in conveying the concerns and messages of the international community to the Government and in particular to Senior General Than Shwe. Austria will continue to firmly support the United Nations good offices mission and his personal engagement.

Austria notes with great concern that, in the course of the past year, the human rights situation in Myanmar has deteriorated significantly. Daw Aung San Suu Kyi has been detained as a consequence of an alleged breach of her house arrest — an arrest that, according to the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention, was in violation not only of international law but also of national Myanmar law. Moreover, in recent weeks, intensified fighting in the East of the country has forced thousands of civilians to flee to neighbouring States.

All of these developments do not bode well for Myanmar's plans for a peaceful transition to democracy. We therefore believe that the visit by the Secretary-General was indeed very timely and important. All the areas that he covered during his visit — the release of all political prisoners, including Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, the resumption of a substantive dialogue with a clear time frame, the criteria for free and fair elections, national development and humanitarian assistance, especially the swift issuance of visas — are of great relevance to Myanmar and, as the Secretary-General highlighted in his speech in Yangon, they are also interconnected. As has been pointed out by the Secretary-General, neither peace nor development can thrive without democracy and respect for human rights.

Like others, Austria is clearly disappointed by the Government's decision to deny the Secretary-General a meeting with Daw Aung San Suu Kyi. We share his view that the Government missed an important opportunity.

The fate of the political prisoners, including Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, will evidently be of great relevance to the credibility of the elections in 2010 and their national and international perception of being free and fair. We urge the Government of Myanmar to immediately and unconditionally release Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and all political prisoners and detainees.

We share the Secretary-General's concern about the high level of poverty in Myanmar and the suffering of its people. The effective cooperation among the Government of Myanmar, the United Nations and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, undertaken in the framework of the Tripartite Core Group in response to Cyclone Nargis, has clearly demonstrated the value of engagement over isolation. We strongly commend these efforts and hope that this spirit of openness will

also be applied in the future to practical issues related to humanitarian assistance — namely, full and unimpeded humanitarian access — development cooperation and the proposed establishment of a national economic forum.

Given the fact that opium production in the territory of Myanmar is still the second highest in the world, the active promotion of alternative development activities, pursued by the Government of Myanmar with the support of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime country office, could help redress this situation.

In its Council conclusions of 27 April, the European Union recalled its important and growing role as a donor to the country and its readiness to further increase its assistance to the people of Myanmar. However, genuine positive steps on the basis of the Secretary-General's proposals will be necessary in order to enable the European Union and other donors to unleash the full potential of their cooperation with the country.

In conclusion, allow me to stress that Austria now hopes that the Myanmar Government will act on the Secretary-General's requests and proposals. We are convinced that this would be in the best interests of the country and its people. We wish to encourage the Myanmar authorities to cooperate closely and constructively with the Secretary-General and Special Adviser Ibrahim Gambari in the follow-up to his visit.

Mr. Bui The Giang (Viet Nam): I wish to join other Council members in thanking the Secretary-General for his descriptive briefing on his Myanmar visit 10 days ago. We are particularly appreciative of and grateful for the Secretary-General's personal efforts and commitment in making this visit, given his very tight schedule. I also thank Ambassador Than Swe, Permanent Representative of Myanmar, for his statement.

It is our view that the visit was timely and necessary, given the overall situation in Myanmar at this juncture. In reality, it has further confirmed the role of the United Nations, represented by the Secretary-General, as a key mediator and its commitment to helping the Government and people of Myanmar with a broad-based, forward-looking package.

As we have learned directly from the Secretary-General, all activities scheduled for the visit except one were realized. He had two meetings with Senior General Than Shwe and several meetings with high-level Government officials, at which he straightforwardly raised his views and recommendations on the current situation. He also had a frank exchange of views with leaders of 10 registered political parties, including a separate private meeting with the National League for Democracy and representatives of ceasefire groups. In particular, he met with and made public critical comments to a large audience comprised of over 300 participants from non-governmental organizations, civil society groups and the diplomatic corps, which is yet another sign of Myanmar authorities' continued respect for the Secretary-General and his opinion.

We regret but understand from the local legal perspective the Secretary-General's inability to meet with Daw Aung San Suu Kyi. We regard the Secretary-General's meeting with Tripartite Core Group as very important, for it again gives added value to the successful cooperation between the United Nations, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and the Government of Myanmar.

While sharing the common wish to see faster and more tangible progress in all fields of life in Myanmar, we take positive note of the decision by the Government of Myanmar to grant amnesty to prisoners and enable them to participate in next year's elections, which we hope will be free, fair and inclusive, as a first concrete measure in follow-up to the Secretary-General's visit.

At the same time, taking into account the complex situation of Myanmar as a country emerging from years of, and still suffering from, political tension, economic underdevelopment and disastrous natural calamities, we believe that the visit has proved to be a meaningful step in a process needed for Myanmar to become a peaceful, stable and prosperous country. In this process, it is the people of Myanmar who will determine their own destiny. The assistance of the international community and the United Nations is extremely important and will be effective when it is based on the engagement of and cooperation with the Government and the people of Myanmar, as has been the case, particularly in the present context of the country's seven-step road map towards democracy and national reconciliation.

As stated on many occasions, Viet Nam supports a comprehensive approach in helping to address the

root causes of the challenges that Myanmar is facing, which lie in poverty and economic underdevelopment. In that connection, the establishment of a national economic forum, with a focus on agriculture, will be pivotal. For that to be realized fruitfully, we believe that United Nations agencies and donors should and could play a more active role.

Finally, as a country in the region with a high stake in seeing peace, stability and development promoted in Myanmar, Viet Nam wishes to reaffirm its continued support for the Secretary-General's good offices and all other efforts conducive to the national reconciliation and democratization process in that country. In ways that we deem appropriate and productive, we will continue to be a constructive part of that process.

Mr. Churkin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We are grateful to the Secretary-General for his substantive briefing on his recent trip. We listened closely to the statement by the Permanent Representative of Myanmar.

In our view, the Secretary-General's visit was timely and necessary. The programme of work was extremely full: the Secretary-General met twice with the head of State, and met also with the Prime Minister, representatives of political parties, including the opposition National League for Democracy (NLD), and armed ethnic-minority groups. The Secretary-General personally visited areas that were affected by last year's destructive natural disaster. We note the constructive spirit displayed by the Myanmar authorities in permitting the Secretary-General to speak before the broader Myanmar public and the press.

He had hoped to meet with Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, representing the NLD. We would observe that that should not be the sole criterion on which his visit is judged. He openly and directly recalled to the authorities and the country's highest leaders the importance of democracy in Myanmar and reaffirmed the readiness of the international community to provide comprehensive assistance to help overcome urgent problems. We welcome the multidimensional nature of the Secretary-General's efforts, which encompass the socio-economic and humanitarian aspects of cooperation with Myanmar.

The good offices mission is a process. It is clear that many of the questions set out by the Secretary-General at Nay Pyi Taw during his trip cannot be resolved immediately. Time and patience are needed. We are counting on the constructive efforts of Mr. Ibrahim Gambari, Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Myanmar.

Myanmar is now preparing for general parliamentary elections, to be held in 2010; this is the most recent stage in the road map of the democratic transition. The country's highest leadership reassured the Secretary-General that the upcoming elections would be free and fair and that all political parties, including the National League for Democracy, would be able to participate. We expect those reassurances to be backed up by concrete measures. We welcome the readiness expressed by the Permanent Representative of Myanmar to cooperate with the United Nations and the international community in the organization of the elections and in a number of other spheres.

We are grateful to the Secretary-General for his active personal role in carrying out his mission of good offices. That mission has provided an important and effective channel of communication between the Security Council, the United Nations and Myanmar. The Russian Federation will continue to provide that mission with needed assistance.

Mr. Vilović (Croatia): I too would like to join the Secretary-General for briefing the Council and providing us with a first-hand account of his recent trip to Myanmar. Croatia commends the Secretary-General for the continued personal leadership he has demonstrated on this issue. Fully cognizant of the challenges faced by the Secretary-General in deciding whether to visit Myanmar, Croatia welcomes the visit, which was aimed at pressing the Myanmar Government to release political prisoners, including Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, and to hold free and fair elections.

Croatia values the Secretary-General's frank assessment of the outcome of his meetings with senior members of Myanmar's leadership. We were particularly interested also to learn of the Secretary-General's impressions drawn from his meeting with representatives of ethnic minority groups and representatives and leaders of several political parties, including members of the National League for Democracy, as well as his impressions regarding the status of humanitarian and reconstruction efforts in the Irrawaddy delta since his first visit, in the aftermath of Cyclone Nargis. We were encouraged to hear about the good cooperation among the Government of Myanmar,

the United Nations and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations.

Croatia remains deeply concerned about recent events in Myanmar concerning political prisoners and the regime's treatment of ethnic minorities, in violation of international humanitarian law, alongside its continuing lack of respect for the basic human rights of its population. In that respect, Croatia shares the international community's increasing sense of frustration with the Myanmar authorities' continuing political blockage of international efforts to bring about substantive progress towards an inclusive process of democratization in the run-up to the 2010 elections.

Given the complexity of the political situation in Myanmar, which has been further complicated by the ongoing trial of Aung San Suu Kyi, Croatia deeply appreciates the good offices of the Secretary-General in conveying, in unequivocal terms, the fundamental concerns of the international community directly to Senior General Than Shwe and other senior officials. We also believe that the visit serves another important purpose: in laying out his vision for Myanmar in his speech of 4 July, the Secretary-General also sent a crucial message from the international community that Myanmar has a choice about how to proceed. National ownership of the political process is not in question here, and primary responsibility for its progress lies with the Myanmar authorities and the choices they wish to make.

It is deeply regrettable, therefore, that Myanmar's leaders chose not to use the unique opportunity of the Secretary-General's visit to demonstrate any level of commitment to the promotion of genuine democratic reform. Indeed, their refusal to allow the Secretary-General to meet with Aung San Suu Kyi is of great concern to us, as was the leadership's resistance to many of the Secretary-General's proposals. We strongly urge the Myanmar authorities to utilize the Secretary-General's good offices and begin to show some readiness to cooperate, by translating into actions the assurances they gave during the visit that they would make the 2010 elections credible by releasing all political prisoners, including Aung San Suu Kyi, as well as resuming a general process of dialogue and national reconciliation.

Croatia stands ready, along with the rest of the international community, to continue to help the people of Myanmar achieve their aspirations to a democratic and prosperous future. In that respect, Croatia reiterates its support for the continued important role the Secretary-General must play in Myanmar through his good offices mission and through the work of his Special Envoy, Ibrahim Gambari.

Mr. Liu Zhenmin (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I wish at the outset to thank Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his briefing. We also thank the Permanent Representative of Myanmar, Ambassador U Than Swe, for his statement.

China places high value on the Secretary-General's visit to Myanmar in early July. We greatly appreciate the efforts he has made since he assumed his post to promote the democratic process and national reconciliation in Myanmar. We believe that his visit was very valuable and brought great influence to bear. China appreciates the high-level reception accorded to the Secretary-General by Myanmar and is encouraged by the determination expressed by Myanmar to promote the democratic process and actively cooperate with the United Nations.

We note that some media and certain countries are not happy with the fact that the Secretary-General did not meet with Daw Aung San Suu Kyi. In our view, the Secretary-General met with many people during his visit; whether or not he met with Daw Aung San Suu Kyi should not be used as a criterion to measure the success of his visit.

Daw Aung San Suu Kyi was unfortunately involved in a legal proceeding. In order to maintain impartiality in the judicial process, the Myanmar side did not make the arrangements for the Secretary-General to meet with her, which is totally understandable. The United Nations should respect the jurisdiction of its Member States.

We have time and again stressed that the Secretary-General's good offices are a process and that his visit was part of the good offices mandate. During his visit, the Secretary-General had in-depth dialogues with the top leaders of Myanmar, directly conveyed to them the concern of the international community on the question of Myanmar, and enhanced mutual trust with that country. That will play an important role in encouraging the Myanmar side to maintain the current momentum and promote the democratic process according to the established plan.

The Secretary-General also had extensive contacts with the civil society of Myanmar and exerted a positive influence on its members. All of these developments fully indicate that the visit of the Secretary-General is of positive and important significance.

In recent years, the Secretary-General has actively conducted good offices in Myanmar, as mandated by the General Assembly. His unremitting efforts and the positive outcome achieved thereby deserve an objective and fair assessment by the international community. Up to 2006, when Mr. Gambari made his first visit to the country at the request of the Secretary-General, Myanmar had taken 14 years to complete the first step of the seven-step road map. Next year, however, it will finish the fifth step by holding the first general elections in 20 years. These achievements would not have been possible without the Secretary-General's good offices and Myanmar's own efforts.

Taking into account Myanmar's historical evolution and the political reality in the country, the aforementioned progress was no easy gain. It is unfair to turn a blind eye to the progress that Myanmar has made or to continuously focus on picking at its Government. The international community should make a balanced assessment of the efforts Myanmar has made, lend its Government more encouragement and assistance, and treat it with less arrogance and prejudice.

As an Asian country and Myanmar's close neighbour, China fully understands the difficulties facing the people and the Government of Myanmar. Myanmar is plagued by a myriad of problems, not just one problem concerning a single individual. As a least developed country, while Myanmar is self-sufficient agriculturally, the majority of its people have yet to share the dividends of industrialization. The biggest problem for Myanmar is therefore development.

As Myanmar is a multi-ethnic nation, national reconciliation faces a serious challenge there, with armed groups inside its territory yet to sign peace agreements with the Government. The greatest challenge for Myanmar is therefore achieving national unity and social stability.

As both an old country with a long history of civilization and a new one that emerged from the Second World War after shaking off colonial rule, Myanmar's democratic process and system of governance are faced with many problems. Like many other developing countries, Myanmar's problems can only be gradually addressed in the process of its economic and social development.

It is obvious that Myanmar's problems cannot be solved exclusively through Western-style problem-solving. We hope that the Government of Myanmar will implement the seven-step road map of its democratic process with due seriousness and make full preparations for the general elections scheduled next year. We hope that the Government of Myanmar will engage in steady reform and lead its people towards greater economic achievements. We also hope that the international community will make an objective and fair assessment of its multifaceted problems and lend a helping hand to Myanmar. It is also our hope that the countries concerned will lift their sanctions against Myanmar so as to provide the people of that country with a fair and enabling environment for its economic development.

China supports Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and Mr. Gambari in their continued good offices. It is our sincere hope that the Secretary-General's good offices will help Myanmar to achieve domestic stability and national reconciliation, and that the United Nations will play a constructive role in helping the country to address its economic, social, humanitarian and human rights issues. China has been and will be helping the Government of Myanmar in its efforts to address its problems in a responsible and constructive manner, but we believe that events inside Myanmar are the internal affairs of Myanmar itself and should be handled by its own Government and people through consultations.

The situation in Myanmar poses no threat to international or regional peace or security. China has explicitly opposed the inclusion of the question of Myanmar on the Security Council's agenda, and we are against the policy of isolating and sanctioning Myanmar. China's position on this matter remains unchanged.

As Myanmar's friendly neighbour, China will always provide assistance to the people and the Government of that country within its capabilities. We hope that the members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and other countries of the region will work together to help Myanmar address its difficulties.

Mr. Çorman (Turkey): I would like to start by thanking the Secretary-General for his extensive briefing concerning his recent visit to Myanmar on 3 and 4 July 2009. This second visit of the Secretary-General in just over a year was again timely, and we hope that it will lead to concrete examples of cooperation between the Government of Myanmar and the United Nations. I would also like to thank the Permanent Representative of Myanmar for his statement.

Turkey attaches great importance to national reconciliation and the protection of human rights in Myanmar. We therefore fully support the Secretary-General's good offices mission in this direction, as mandated by the General Assembly, as well as the efforts of his Special Adviser, Ambassador Ibrahim Gambari.

Myanmar has undergone very tough times in the past two years, and we all remember the disastrous consequences of Cyclone Nargis. This tragedy showed the resilience of the people of Myanmar, and we are now happy to hear from the Secretary-General that the rebuilding efforts are gradually bearing fruit as a result of effective cooperation between the United Nations, the Government of Myanmar and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations. We are also pleased to hear of some other positive developments in the political and economic domains, such as the ceasefire agreements between the Government and armed groups, as well as the facilitation of external trade and investment.

Yet, we would want to see more substantive and tangible progress in the protection of human rights and political freedoms. Echoing the words of the Secretary-General at the end of his visit to Yangon, peace, development and human rights are closely interrelated in all countries, and Myanmar is no exception.

In this regard, the elections to be held in 2010 will be a critical test. These elections, including developments in the pre-election period, ought to be free and fair. All political parties should be allowed to campaign for and participate in these elections freely. We noted with interest the reassurances provided by the Myanmar leadership to that end. We would now like to see that commitment followed up by concrete steps. Furthermore, the Government of Myanmar should establish the necessary conditions for national reconciliation through an inclusive process with the full participation of all political parties and groups.

This brings me to the issue of the release of all political prisoners, and in particular to the situation of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi. As a leading opposition figure, it is unfortunate that Ms. Suu Kyi has spent 13 years under house arrest. In this context, and even more significantly, her recent imprisonment just a few weeks before she was bound to be released of house arrest raises yet again important questions that need to be elucidated. In this regard, the refusal of the Myanmar Government to allow the Secretary-General to visit Ms. Suu Kyi is certainly not a welcome development.

However, irrespective of the individual cases, we believe that it is high time that the Government of Myanmar heed the repeated appeals of the Security Council and release all political prisoners. This is indeed essential to the establishment of a political environment conducive to dialogue, conciliation and mutual respect leading to free and fair elections, the results of which have to be respected and honoured by all.

We sincerely hope that all parties, and primarily the Government, will seize the historic opportunity presented by the 2010 elections in order to embark upon an irreversible path towards national reconciliation and peace. The Secretary-General has declared that the United Nations could and would assist Myanmar in this process, and Turkey supports the United Nations efforts in this direction.

Mr. Dabbashi (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) (*spoke in Arabic*): I should like at the outset to thank the Secretary-General for his briefing and to commend his good offices efforts to promote stability and national reconciliation in Myanmar. We stress our support for his personal work and that of his Special Adviser, Mr. Gambari.

We also extend our thanks to the Permanent Representative of Myanmar for his statement.

We welcome the Secretary-General's visit to Myanmar and his talks with the Government and other parties on that occasion. At the same time, we note his inability to meet with the opposition leader, Ms. Daw Aung San Suu Kyi. We regret that failure, despite our understanding of the position of the Myanmar authorities, as outlined by the Permanent Representative of that country earlier in this meeting.

We fully understand that the Secretary-General's personal efforts and good offices, exercised through Mr. Gambari, have led to real movement and positive developments. While slow, such developments — first among which is the commitment of the Myanmar authorities to pursue their follow-up of the seven-step road map and, at the appropriate moment, to enact a law to regulate the 2010 elections — augur well for real progress. We hope that these efforts will advance the democratic process and achieve a lasting solution to all Myanmar's problems.

We believe that dialogue with the Myanmar authorities must be pursued in order to encourage them to achieve the aims we all support and aspire to, above all the release of political prisoners and detainees, continued dialogue among the various parties, and the establishment of an atmosphere conducive to the organization of elections, the promotion of the rule of law and respect for human rights.

We hope that the Myanmar authorities will continue to cooperate with the United Nations and the international community in order to ensure national reconciliation, lay the foundations for the full participation of all political actors in the 2010 elections, and establish stability throughout the country. We believe that coordination between the United Nations and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) is also critical to achieving tangible and timely results.

In previous statements to the Council, my country has stressed that issues relating to the internal affairs of States must be addressed through consultation and constructive dialogue between the Government and political actors involved, with the assistance of the international community. We reiterate that point of view and commend the role played by ASEAN, its support for the good offices of the United Nations and its assistance to the people of Myanmar in achieving national reconciliation in their country. We hope that Myanmar will soon achieve political and economic stability, development and national reconciliation, and that its people will live in peace.

We emphasize that the future of Myanmar is exclusively in the hands of its people, who must work together to ensure that it will be a prosperous one.

Mr. Urbina (Costa Rica) (*spoke in Spanish*): Let me begin by thanking the Secretary-General for his briefing this morning. I also thank the Permanent Representative of Myanmar for his statement.

We believe that the Secretary-General's timely visit to Myanmar represented an important milestone in his good offices efforts in that country. Previous gestures — in particular, the repeated visits undertaken by Mr. Gambari — have embodied the international community's response. The Secretary-General's messages, we believe, have been especially apposite and address the international community's concerns. A response to these messages would lend new impetus to a process that should ultimately lead to the normalization of national life and development in Myanmar.

In that regard, Costa Rica is grateful for the Secretary-General's commitment to the ideals of the United Nations, but regrets the behaviour of the Government of Myanmar. We can neither claim that the release of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi would be the sole benchmark of change within the Government, nor ignore the fact that the Nobel Peace Prize laureate is a disturbing symbol of the Government of Myanmar's oppressive response. Furthermore, the constant rise in the number of political prisoners runs counter to the continual demands of the international community.

While Costa Rica believes that there must be a gradual shift from sanctions and isolation towards a model of greater participation and international cooperation that seeks to open doors, build bridges and create opportunities for inclusive dialogue, reconciliation and democracy, we also believe that such a shift will depend on whether the Government of Myanmar works actively to increase the international community's confidence in its political plans, particularly in the areas highlighted by the Secretary-General.

A lasting peace and economic development in Myanmar will depend on participation and joint action by all social sectors without exclusion. Costa Rica welcomes the statement by the Permanent Representative of Myanmar that his Government places priority on the transfer of power to a civilian Government after next year's elections. However, it must be made clear that such a transfer will be legitimate domestically and internationally only if it is the result of a process that respects the rights of all and provides guarantees for participation by all.

The day will come when power cannot be based on the repression and denial of rights. Repression must

be ended. Costa Rica calls for the release of all political prisoners and for the restoration of all rights to Daw Aung San Suu Kyi. We believe that those are the urgent steps required in order to begin a vigorous process of national reconciliation leading to legitimate elections next year. Those are basic prerequisites for future development.

I conclude by expressing appreciation for the Secretary-General's concern that there be greater access for humanitarian assistance, which continues to be sorely needed. My delegation thanks him for his efforts.

Mr. Koudougou (Burkina Faso) (*spoke in French*): We should like at the outset to thank the Secretary-General for his briefing following his visit to Myanmar, the second of its kind within a year, to better see first-hand the development of the socio-political and humanitarian situation on the ground and to jump-start the reconciliation and democratization process. We also thank the Permanent Representative of Myanmar for his statement.

We welcome the Secretary-General's meeting with the main political and national actors, particularly General Than Shwe, and development partners, including the diplomatic corps and non-governmental organizations. However, we regret that it was not possible for him to meet with the opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi.

In the political area, we should like to urge the Government of Myanmar to continue the release of political prisoners, including Aung San Suu Kyi, to establish ongoing dialogue with all political actors, and to create an environment conducive to the holding of pluralistic, free and transparent elections in 2010, which is a necessary element for the return of lasting stability, peace and development to the country.

Given the importance of the elections, we should like to emphasize that it will be essential to adopt in the near future appropriate legislation establishing a competent structure for organizing and managing the elections and, when the time comes, to accept the assistance of the international community, in particular the United Nations. We are encouraged by the commitment of Myanmar's authorities in that regard, as expressed earlier by the Permanent Representative of Myanmar.

In the humanitarian area, my delegation welcomes the meeting between the Secretary-General and the Tripartite Core Group, which is responsible for rebuilding the areas devastated by Cyclone Nargis. We welcome the progress made in the Ayeyarwaddy Delta and, given the challenges yet to be addressed, we request the Government to further facilitate humanitarian access to those areas so that the population can receive the assistance needed to improve their living conditions.

We call on the Government to facilitate the establishment of the national economic forum by focusing on priority sectors, such as agriculture and income-producing activities, that could improve the population's living conditions. We should like to encourage the armed groups that have chosen to observe the ceasefire to honour their obligations, including the cessation of all recruitment and use of children, and we urge other groups that have not yet done so to join the process.

My delegation would like to recall that the path towards national reconciliation, peace and lasting development is long and requires the firm and substantial commitment of all national actors and the assistance of the international community. That is why we call on the Government to take all appropriate measures to find a lasting consensus solution to the concerns expressed by the Secretary-General. Ultimately, it is primarily up to the people of Myanmar as a whole to overcome the obstacles to building a prosperous nation.

In conclusion, we reiterate our thanks and encouragement to the Secretary-General and his Special Adviser for their efforts to help Myanmar emerge from the impasse. We also call on the other countries of the region, particularly the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, to maintain their spirit of solidarity towards Myanmar.

The President: I shall now make a statement in my capacity as representative of Uganda.

I wish to salute the Secretary-General for his briefing and to thank the Permanent Representative of Myanmar for his statement.

As the Government of Myanmar pursues its seven-stage road map to democracy, stage five — which relates to next year's elections — is important, as the elections will contribute significantly to the

democratization process in the country. We urge the Government of Myanmar to ensure that the electoral process is free, fair, transparent and inclusive and that all sectors of Myanmar society fully participate.

We call on the Government and on all parties to pursue dialogue and reconciliation. In that regard, we call for the unconditional release of all political prisoners, including Aung San Suu Kyi.

I now resume my functions as President of the Security Council.

There are no further speakers inscribed on my list. The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The meeting rose at 1.20 p.m.